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Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00
ACDA-12 MCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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O 120914Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4603

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MASS, BM
SUBJECT: PREPARATION OF CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION DOCUMENT (CPD)
FOR FY 1979 SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REF: STATE 290763

1. IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST REF TEL, THE FOLLOWING IS PROVIDED REGARDING SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO BURMA.

A. JUSTIFICATION FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

1) IN RECENT YEARS U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO BURMA HAS CONSISTED EXCLUSIVELY OF FMS CASH AND COMMERCIAL SALES, MOSTLY SPARE PARTS AND AMMUNITION FOR EQUIPMENT FURNISHED UNDER MAP PRIOR TO 1970. IN VALUE THESE SALES AVERAGED LESS THAN $200,000 A YEAR OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

2) AT PRESENT THE MAJOR U.S. INTEREST IN BURMA IS THE CONTROL OF ILLICIT TRAFFIC IN NARCOTICS, ESPECIALLY CURTAILING THE FLOW OF BURMESE NARCOTICS TO MARKETS ABROAD. BURMA IS A MAJOR PRODUCER OF RAW OPIUM, MOST OF WHICH IS GROWN IN AREAS OF THE COUNTRY DOMINATED BY ARMED INSURGENT/NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS
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WHO DERIVE THEIR INCOME FROM THE OPIUM TRADE, RECENTLY, THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN DISRUPTING THE OUTFLOW OF OPIUM, THROUGH MILITARY ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKERS AND REFINERIES (PARTLY THANKS TO HELICOPTERS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO THEM BY THE UNITED STATES UNDER THE NARCOTICS CONTROL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM) AND THROUGH POPPY CROP DESTRUCTION. ACTION AGAINST NARCOTICS

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TRAFFICKERS/INSURGENTS, INCLUDING THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) IS THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BURMA ARMY. ARMED LARGELY WITH OLDER EQUIPMENT, SMALLER BURMA ARMY ELEMENTS ARE OFTEN AT A DISADVANTAGE AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING CARAVANS AND INSURGENT UNITS, NOW FREQUENTLY BETTER EQUIPPED THAN THE ARMY ITSELF AND INCREASINGLY AGGRESSIVE. BURMA LACKS THE RESOURCES TO MODERNIZE ITS MILITARY FORCES, BUT HAS PURHCASED RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT, SPARES AND AMMUNITION, PRINCIPALLY FOR CASH, FROM SEVERAL NATIONS INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES. THIS LIMITED ASSISTANCE HELPS MAINTAIN THE COMBAT CAPABILITY OF THE BURMA ARMY, THUS SUPPORTING A MAJOR U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVE IN BURMA, I.E. SUPPRESSION OF THE NARCOTICS TRADE. IT ALSO HELPS SECURE BURMA'S CONTINUING COOPERATION IN THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT.

3) WHILE OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO BURMA IS PRIMARILY RELEVANT TO U.S. INTEREST IN NARCOTICS, IT IS ALSO OF SOME SIGNIFICANCE TO US THAT THE BCP AND ALLIED INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENT A POTENTIAL LONG RANGE THREAT TO THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF BURMA AND ULTIMATELY TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION, MOST NOTABLY THAILAND. HENCE, MODEST SECURITY ASSISTANCE IS ALSO USEFUL FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO A STABLE, SECURE AND INDEPENDENT SOUTHEAST ASIA.

B. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM.

1) DEFENSE MINISTRY PROCUREMENT OFFICERS HAVE TOLD US THAT GUB
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PLANS TO PURCHASE AN UNSPECIFIED AMOUNT OF 40 MM AMMUNITION UNDER FMS PROCEDURES IN FY-79. AT THIS TIME THE GUB IS NOT PLANNING TO PURCHASE ANY OTHER MAJOR DEFENSE ARTICLES FROM THE U.S., BUT WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO SEEK SPARE PARTS AND AMMUNITION FOR EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO BURMA UNDER MAP PRIOR TO 1970. THE 40 MM AMMUNITION IS FOR GRENADE LAUNCHERS, TO BE EMPLOYED AGAINST THE BCP AND OTHER INSURGENT/NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS, HENCE ITS SALE TO BURMA SERVES U.S. INTERESTS AS ELABORATED UNDER SECTION A ABOVE. IT IS POSSIBLE ALSO THAT THE GUB MAY AGAIN SEEK PERMISSION TO CO-PRODUCE 40 MM AMMUNITION LOCALLY. THE MISSION CONSIDERES IT UNLIKELY THAT THE GUB WILL ATTEMPT TO PURCHASE ANY ADDITIONAL MAJOR DEFENSE ARTICLES FROM THE UNITED STATES IN FY-79 BARRING A DRAMATIC AND UNEXPECTED IMPROVEMENT IN BURMA'S ECONOMY.

2) THE SALE OF 40 MM AMMUNTION TO BURMA APPEARS CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. IT IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO AN IMPORTANT U.S. INTEREST, I.E., STEMMING THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS TO THE UNITED STATES, AND SEEMS TO MEET THE OTHER CRITERIA LAID DOWN BY THE PRESIDENT. NO ADVANCED WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE INVOLVED, NOR IS THERE ANY LIKELIHOOD OF THIRD COUNTRY TRANSFERS OR THE STIMULATION OF AN ARMS RACE.

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3) IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE HOST GOVERNMENT WOULD SIGN A LETTER OF OFFER FOR 40 MM AMMUNITION IN FY-79 IF THE USG WERE TO APPROVE THE SALE.

2. COMMERCIAL SALES -- THE GUB HAS NO PLANS AT PRESENT FOR THE COMMERCIAL PURCHASE OF DEFENSE ARTICLES, SERVICES OR RELATED TRAINING IN FY-79.
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Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Concepts: DOCUMENTS, SECURITY, PROGRAM ASSISTANCE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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